

BLM Cedar City Field Office Site Inspection Report

May 29, 2009

File: UTU-67116
Hecla Mining Company
Escalante Mine Tailings Impoundment

Inspector: Ed Ginouves, CCFO Mining Engineer

On May 28, 2009, I made an inspection of the Escalante Mine tailings impoundment. The previous inspection had been made on June 6, 2008. I visit the site each year to monitor the progress of the knapweed eradication effort, which is only remaining reclamation deficiency. Typically my visits are in early summer to allow the plants to mature to a size that makes them easier to see, but not too late to allow them to go seed. I visited a little earlier this year because we have had warmer than average springtime temperatures and I thought the plants might be maturing a little earlier this year. Hecla claims to have inspected and sprayed the known occurrences at least annually, although my inspections reveal that this effort has been less than diligent.

The weather was sunny over the valley floor with scattered cumulus over the higher terrain. Site conditions were dry.

Inspection Findings: I parked the vehicle at the east gate and walked to the southern edge of the impoundment, where the bulk of the knapweed had been historically found. I searched the diversion ditch area and adjacent slopes all the way to west gate (which was still wired close). To my disappointment, I found ~ 50 plants, virtually all of which were in clusters of several plants on the north facing slope adjacent to the diversion ditch. All of the plants were in the juvenile stage and I destroyed them by uprooting. Hecla employees/ contractors must have visited the site within the last week or so as evidenced by fresh footprints in the ditch bottom and drooping of some of the knapweed plants due to being sprayed with herbicide. Most of the plants I uprooted showed no signs of having been sprayed and must have been missed by the sprayers. The presence of the plants evidences that the site can't be released yet again.

I meandered across the surface of the impoundment in the hopes of spotting any stray knapweed plants there but found none. I re-checked the Scotch thistle location on the surface of the impoundment found in 2005 and found a dozen juvenile plants, which I destroyed.

The impoundment structures were all working as designed. The exterior impoundment fence was in good condition with no accumulations of tumbleweeds. Both the east and west gates were wired closed. The vegetative cover on the impoundment surface appears stable and is reasonably diverse; the dominant species are rabbitbrush and globemallow.

The vegetative cover on the reclaimed low-grade stockpile (on private land near the mill) is little changed from last year; the predominate species present are mustard, hoarhound, cheatgrass, Russian thistle. Some wheatgrass was present by estimated to be < 1% of the vegetative cover.

I checked on the knapweed site east of the County Road across from the mill building and could not locate a single plant. The contracted spraying effort here appears successful.



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Cluster of juvenile knapweed plants on slope adjacent to diversion ditch in southeast corner of impoundment.



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**View, looking westerly, along the crest of the reclaimed low-grade stockpile area (private land).
Vegetation visible is mustard.**